

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 0902

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PGOV, HA

SUBJECT: CABINET CHANGES: COMMENTARY

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 0864

1. SUMMARY: THE EXTENSIVE CHANGES IN THE HAITIAN CABINET, ANNOUNCED MARCH 31 -- INVOLVING 6 MAJOR MINISTRIES -- APPEAR TO REFLECT NO BASIC CHANGE IN THE POLICIES UNDERTAKEN SINCE 1971, BUT RATHER A CONTINUING EFFORT BY THE YOUNG PRESIDENT TO ACHIEVE A HIGHER LEVEL OF TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN COPING WITH HAITI'S ENORMOUS DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS. DUVALIERIST FIXHWRES AT INTERIOR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EDUCATION WERE REMOVED, AND THE ABLE UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE WAS PROMOTED TO HEAD THIS IMPORTANT DEPARTMENT. THE DEPARTURE OF PAUL BLANCHET FROM INTERIOR REMOVED AN ARCH-NATIONALIST AND DOCTRINAIRE OFFICIAL FROM A KEY POSITION, AND THE LESS FRACTIOUS STYLE EXPECTED OF HIS SUCCESSOR WOULD HELP IN INDUCING A MORE RATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF HAITIAN INTERESTS, PERHAPS INCLUDING THOSE INVOLVED IN INVESTMENT DISPUTES. CONTINUITY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FINANCE, AND COMMERCE WAS REFLECTED

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BY THE RETENTION OF THE PRESENT AND HIGHLY RESPECTED INCUMBENTS IN THEIR JOBS. THE OUSTER OF THE DYNAMIC AND

OUTSPOKEN PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER IS TO BE REGRETTED,
ALTHOUGH HIS SUCCESSOR HAS WORKED WELL WITH OURIAID
TECHNICIANS. END SUMMARY

2. AN EXTENSIVE CABINET RESHUFFLE - IN HIS FIRST MAJOR
CABINET CHANGE IN OVER 2 YEARS, PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE
DUVALIER OUSTED 2 MINISTERIAL PERENNIALS, INTERIOR SECRETARY
PAUL BLANCHET AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY MAX ANTOINE, AND
EASED OUT AGRICULTURAL SECRETARY JAURES LEVEQUE (WHO HAD BEEN
AILING, THOUGH HE HAD TAKEN A TURN FOR THE BETTER). BLANCHET'S
DEPARTURE WILL EVOKE NO TEARS FROM RESIDENT
FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN
AND MISSIONARIES, TO WHOM HE HAD DISPLAYED AN OPEN HOSTILITY,
OFTEN APPEARING TO CONTRADICT THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY OF A
FRIENDLIER, MORE OPEN HAITI. PERHAPS THE BIGGEST SURPRISE WAS
THE REMOVAL OF THE PUBLICLY POPULAR, HARD-WORKING, AND NON-
NONSENSE PUBLIC WORKS SECRETARY, PIERRE PETIT. TWO NEW
MINISTERS WERE RECRUITED DIRECTLY FROM PROVINCIAL CAPITALS --
AS IF TO PROMISE GREATER ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS OUTSIDE THE
CAPITAL -- AND A DYNAMIC WOMAN DEPUTY WAS APPOINTED AS AN UNDER-
SECRETARY. THE EXTENSIVE RESHUFFLE ACCOMPLISHED THE RETIREMENT
OF SEVERAL POLITICAL HOLDOVERS FROM THE PAPA DOC ERA AND THE
REPLACEMENT OF VARIOUS OFFICIALS WHO HAD GRADUALLY LOST THE
YOUNG PRESIDENT'S CONFIDENCE. DUVALIER'S ADDRESS TO THE NEW
CABINET MENTIONED OBLIQUELY THAT THERE HAD BEEN "DEVIATIONS"

CARRYING OUT PORTIONS OF THE FIRST 5-YEAR PLAN AND
SOME "LACK OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP IN DEFENDING THE INTERESTS
OF THE COLLECTIVITY". MINISTRY BY MINISTRY WE READ THE
CHANGES AS FOLLOWS:

3. INTERIOR & NATIONAL DEFENSE - PIERRE BIAMBY IS CONSIDERED
PRO-AMERICAN IN OUTLOOK, ALTHOUGH HE HAS KEPT SUCH A LOW POLITICAL
PROFILE IN RECENT YEARS THAT HE RARELY SURFACED ON THE DIPLOMATIC
CIRCUIT. HE HAS BEEN NATIONAL PALACE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY SINCE
1964,
AND BEFORE THAT WAS SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL OF
SECRETARIES OF STATE. GIVEN THE DEPLORABLE STATE OF STAFF WORK
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AT THE PALACE, HE CANNOT BE CONSIDERED MUCH OF AN ADMINISTRATOR.
BUT INSOFAR AS US AND OTHER FOREIGN INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED, AT
INTERIOR HE REPRESENTS AN IMPROVEMENT OVER PAULSALANCHET, WHOSE
FEISTY NATIONALISM AND QUICK TEMPER OFTEN RESULTED IN UNNECESSARY
PROCEDURAL DELAYS THAT TURNED OFF FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN AND POTENTIAL
INVESTORS. MOREOVER, THE PUBLIC POLICIES BLANCHET PUSHED (LOCAL
CWOERNMENT REORGANIZATION, NAMMUNAL REFORESTATION, AND THE ENDING
OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MARKET TAXES ONLY PARTIALLY REPLACED BY
INCREASED CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES) WERE ARE CRITICIZED AS
EITHER UNACCOMPLISHED OR UNSUCCESSFUL.

4. BERTHOLAND EDOUARD'S TRIUMPHAL RETURN AS INTERIOR UNDER-SECRETARY AFTER HAVING BEEN OUSTED BY BLANCHZO AS SECRETARY GENERAL SHOULD FURTHER ENCOURAGE A FRIENDLIER HAITIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGNERS. EDOUARD WAS OUTSPOKEN IN CRITICIZING BLANCHET'S HANDLING OF RESIDENCE PERMITS AND EXIT VISAS

PARTICULARY FOR AMERICANS AND CANADIANS.

5. PUBLIC WORKS - IT IS TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE REASONS FOR PIERRE PETIT'S OUSTER AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY FERNAFM LAURIN, 48, A NATIVE NORTHERNER WHO HAS BEEN PUBLIC WORKS DISTRICT ENGINEER IN CAP HAITIEN. PETIT, A STORMY PETREL IN THE CABINET, MAY HAVE THREATNED TO RESIGN ONE TIME TOO MANY, THIS TIME REPUTEDLY OVER ENERGY POLICY AND POSSIBLY OVER SOME PROPOSED PERSONNEL CHANGES AT PUBLIC WORKS. HIS DENUNCIATIONS OF CIVIC IRRESPONSIBILITY AND HIS AVERSION TO THE NON-FISCALIZED REGIE DU TABAC HAD MADE HIM ENEMIES, BUT THE PRESIDENT HAD CONTINUED TO HOLD HIM IN HIGH REGARD. SOME INTIMATES THINK HIS 12-15 HOUR DAYS WERE PROVING TOO MUCH FOR HIS GENERAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING AND THAT HE WANTED A RESPITE. LAURIN APPEARS TO BE A GOOD ENGINEER, THOUGH USAID'S ROAD MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR HAS SOME DISAGREEMENT WITH HIM OVER THE PROPER UTILIZATION OF HIS DISTRICT. HOWEVER, THE MATTER WAS RESOLVED AND TODAY USAID'S CONTRACTORS WORKING ON SEPRRN OPERATIONS IN CAP HAITIEN CONSIDER THEY ENJOY A GOOD RAPPORT WITH LAURIN. HE IS WELL KNOWN TO SEVERAL OF THEM SOCIALLY. LAURIN'S APPOINTMENT WILL PDYABLY BE WELL RECEIVED IN NORTH HAITI, WHERE HE IS CONSIDERED A LOCAL BOY WHO HAS MADE GOOD. A SURPRISING FALL OUT FROM THE CABINET CHANGES WAS THE REMOVAL OF THE TPTC
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CHIEF ENGINEER FERNAND EDOUARD (WHOSEIHOSITION HAS BEEN EQUIVALENT TO UNDER-SECRETARY IN THAT MINISTRY, WHICH HAS NO SUCH JOB TITLE) AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF SEPRRN, JEAN PIERRE. THIS CHANGE MAY CUT THE MOMENTUM OF DEVELOPING USAID'S NEW \$5 MILLION PROJECT FOR AGRICULTURAL FEEDER ROADS. WHILE NOT CONSIDERED UNFRIENDLY, PIERGRSYRS PSWSONAL RAPPORT WITH THE USAID CONTRACT GROUP HAS BEEN LESS THAN IDEEB AND HI AOVERLY CONSERVATIVE APPROACH AND GENERALLY POOR ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY HAS MADE HIS STEWARDSHIP OF SEPRRN LESS THAN HOPED FOR.

6. SOCIAL AFFAIRS - OUTGOING SECRETARY MAX ANTOINE WAS THE LAST OF THE INTELLIGENT, ARTICULATE, BUT COMICALLY ABSURD DUVALIERIST SYCOPHANTS WHO POPULATED THE LATE FRANCOIS DUVALIER'S CABINETS. EVER PLAYING TO MADAME DUVALIER'S SENTIMENTS, LAST YEAR ANTOINE PUBLISHED A DULL CUT-AND-PASTE BIOGRAPHY OF PAPA DOC THAT WAS IMPLAUSIBLY HAILED AS GREAT LITERATURE. (AT THE SAME TIME ANOTHER QUASI-COMIC RELIC, AUBELIN JOLICOEUR, IMMORTALIZED AS

THE CHARACTER "PETIT PIERRE" IN GRAHM GREENE'S NOVEL THE COMEDIANS, HAS BEEN DROPPED FROM HIS SINECURE AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL TOURISM.)

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7. ANTOINE'S 14-YEAR RECORD FOR CONTINUOUS MINISTERIAL LONGEVITY WAS MATCHED ONLY BY THAT OF INCOMING SECRETARY DR. ACHILLE SALVANT AS CAREER UNDER-SECRETARY (PUBLIC HEALTH, 1962-67; AGRICULTURE, 1967-71; AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS 1971-76). SALVANT IS A LOW-PROFILE POLITICIAN WITH GOOD BUT NOT OVERLY CLOSE PALACE CONNECTIONS. HE HAS LONG SINCE LIVED DOWN HIS EARLIER REPUTATION AS A KEY TONTON MACOUTE IN CAP HAITIEN, WHERE HE WAS PREFECT AND SENATOR IN 1959. HE REMAINS AN APOLOGIST FOR THE DUVALIERIST REPRESSION OF FREE TRADE UNIONISM, BUT HE MAY TAKE A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD SOME MODEST LIBERALIZATION THAN DID HIS PREDESSOR. SALVANT REPRESENTED HAITI AT OAS INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF LABOR MINISTERS IN GUATEMALA IN NOVEMBER 1975. HE IS FRIENDLY TOWARD THE US.

8. SALVANT'S REPLACEMENT AS UNDER-SECRETARY, MADAME LISE-ANNE PROSPER HERARD, EARLY FORTIES (HUSBAND'S FIRST NAME CARL), DEPUTY FOR BORGNE/PORT MARGOT IN NORTH HAITI, IS DESCRIBED AS A LAWYER, PHARMACIST, SOCIOLOGIST, AND ETHNOLIGIST. WHEN RUNNING FOR REELECTION TO HER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT IN THE

FEBRUARY 1973 ELECTIONS, SHE EXPRESSED STRONG INTEREST IN WOMEN'S AND PEASANT'S RIGHTS AND SHE IS A TENACIOUS, FORCEFUL ADVOCATE, MORE AT EASE IN CREOLE THAN IN FRENCH. SINCE 1973 SHE HAS
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ACTIVELY LOBBIED FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN HER DISTRICT. SHE WILL BE HEARD FROM IN HER NEW POST.

9. PUBLIC HEALTH & POPULATION - INCOMING SECRETARY DR. WILLY VERRIER IS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO USAID PERSONNEL WHO HAVE WORKED WITH HIM IN LES CAYES, WHERE HE HEADED THE LOCAL HOSPITAL SINCE 1970. HE ALSO WAS CHIEF OF THE MEDICAL ZONE, DEPARTMENT OF THE SOUTH. PRIOR TO THAT HE HAD SERVED AS CHIEF SURGEON AT JEREMIE HOSPITAL. HE SPEAKS ENGLISH FLUENTLY. VERRIER APPARENTLY IS NATIVE TO THE SOUTHERN PENINSULA, AND CAN SPEAK AUTHORITATIVELY ABOUT ITS NEEDS WITHIN THE CABINET. HE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE GOOD LEADERSHIP FOR NEW RURAL HEALTH DELIVERY PROGRAMS BEING DESIGNED WITH THE SUPPORT OF USAID. HIS ACCESSION SHOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN DIRECTION AND THERE IS SOME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN PROPOSED BY HIS PREDECESSOR. HE WAS INCLUDED AS A MEMBER OF HAITI'S DELEGATION TO A RECENT PAHO MEETING IN WASHINGTON.

10. THE NEW UNDER-SECRETARY, DR. CONSTANTIN PHILIPPEAUX, WHILE A COMPETENT PHYSICIAN, STRUCK US WHEN DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AS BEING MORE INTERESTED IN TENDING TO HIS PALACE POLITICAL CONNECTIONS THAN WORKING ON NEW HEALTH PROJECTS. APPARENTLY THAT VIEW WAS SHARED BY OUTGOING SECRETARY BEAULIEU, WHO FIRED PHILIPPEAUX. BUT PHILIPPEAUX, LIKE BERTHOLAND EDOUARD AT INTERIOR, FINALLY OUTMANEUVERED HIS FORMER MINISTER, RETURNING TO OFFICE IN THE HIGHER RANK OF UNDER-SECRETARY. AS DIRECTOR GENERAL HE HAD SOME DIFFICULTY IN GETTING HIS POINTS OF VIEW ACCEPTED AS HE WAS CONSIDERED OUT OF TOUCH WITH HAITIAN REALITY BY SOME OF THE OLDER HANDS IN THE MINISTRY. PHILIPPEAUX (WHOSE ELDER BROTHER GERARD HAS HELD CABINET POSTS UNDER PAPA DOC) WAS AN EXPATRIATE FOR SEVERAL YEARS SUCCESSIVELY IN MEXICO, WHERE HE WAS STUDYING, AND IN CANADA, WHERE HE PRACTICED MEDICINE. HIS WIFE IS CANADIAN.

11. NATIONAL EDUCATION - JEAN-MONTES LEFRANC, THE THIRD VETERAN DUVALIERIST NOW SENT TO PASTURE, HAD BEEN A RIGID, DOCTRINAIRE ADMINISTRATOR, AND AS A LONG TIME PROTEGE OF BLANCHET HIS OUSTER ALSO HAS POLITICAL OVERTONES. DR. RAOUL PIERRE-LOUIS, AGE 57, HAS BEEN DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF HAITI SINCE NOVEMBER 1957. HE WAS A
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LEADER GRANTEE TO THE US IN 1959, AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE WITH THIS EMBASSY. ALTHOUGH UNTESTED AT THE LEVEL OF NATIONAL POLICY, PIERRE-LOUIS WAS A REASONABLY ABLE AND WELL-REGARDED ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR WHO POTENTIALLY COULD UNDERTAKE SERIOUS EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS ON A NATIONAL SCALE. HOWEVER, HE WAS KNOWN AS A CONSERVATIVE IN REGARD TO MEDICAL EDUCATION, EMPHASIZING THE ROLE OF MD'S RATHER THAN LOWER-LEVEL MEDICAL PERSONNEL.

12. AGRICULTURE - REMILLOT HERMAN LEVEILLE'S TAKEOVER FROM JAURES LEVEQUE, WHILE NO SURPRISE, UNDOUBTEDLY MEANS THAT WEVEILLE IS EXPECTED TO MOUNT MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS TO OVERCOME HAITI'S STAGGERING AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS. THE KEY TO HAITI'S ECONOMIC SURVIVAL LIES IN INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. AGRICULTURE'S LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO IMPART A MUCH GREATER SENSE OF URGENCY AND DETERMINATION IF THIS BASIC TASK IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. US-EDUCATED (WILLIAMS AND UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS), CAPABLE, FORCEFUL AND EXPERIENCED, LEVEILLE NOW HAS A CHANCE TO ESTABLISH HIS REAL LEADERSHIP ABILITIES. FRIENDLY TO THE US, LEVEILLE WILL NOW PLAY AN EVEN MORE IMPORTANT ROLE IN COOPERATING WITH US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO HAITI. INTIMATELY FAMILIER WITH USAID'S CURRENT AND PLANNED AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS, HE HAS ALREADY STATED THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE OF DIRECTION OR ANY DIMINISHED SUPPORT UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION.

13. LEVEILLE'S REPLACEMENT AS UNDER-SECRETARY, JOSEPH BERNARD, AGE 54, ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS IN AGRICULTURE, BEGINNING IN 1945 AS AN AGRICULTURAL AGENT. BY 1959 HE BECAME DIRECTOR OF THE AGRICULTURAL DIVISION OF THE O.D.V.A., AND IN 1964-71 WAS DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. HE REPLACED LEVEQUE AS DIRECTOR-GENERAL IN 1971. HE IS AN ACCOMPLISHED BUREAUCRAT CLOSELY INVOLVED WITH ALL INTERNATIONAL DONOR ACTIVITIES IN AGRICULTURE. HE HAS ALWAYS PROVED ACCESSIBLE, COOPERATIVE, AND USEFUL AS A POINT OF COORDINATION WITHIN THE MINISTRY, AND HE HAS REPRESENTATIONAL ABILITY NOT OFTEN ENCOUNTERED IN HAITIAN OFFICIALS.

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